

SITUATION REPORT NO. 5
INCIDENT NO. 97-015
DATE: MARCH 26, 1997 TIME: 12:00 P.M.

TO: Governor Edward T. Schafer
State Capitol
Bismarck, ND 58505

1. NATURE OF DISASTER: Spring flood statewide.
2. DEATHS AND INJURIES: No change from the previous report.
3. DAMAGES: Rapid inflows into the Missouri River required the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to reduce Garrison Dam releases on March 25 to 4,000 cubic feet per second (cfs), the lowest amount since construction of the dam. This action helped reduce the river level at Bismarck, which dropped one-half foot between March 25 and March 26 to 13.07 feet. The highest recorded river level since construction of the dam was 14.2 feet. Flood stage is 16 feet. South of Bismarck, the river's Oahe Reservoir is one foot higher than normal and is covered with sheets of ice.

The Missouri River near Williston crested at 24 feet on March 26, four feet above flood stage. The National Weather Service expects the river level to remain near 24 feet for some time because of high runoff in eastern Montana that will eventually feed into the Missouri River.

Flood waters along the Cannonball, Heart and Knife Rivers are beginning to recede as runoff flows toward the Missouri River. On March 26, the Heart River at Mandan was recorded at 15.6 feet; flood stage is 17 feet. The Cannonball River at Regent was at 8.42 feet, well below its 22-foot stage. The Knife River at Golden Valley was at 15.29 feet, substantially lower than its 24-foot flood stage. The National Weather Service canceled its flood warning for Mercer County on March 25.

Up to 20 Grant County residents evacuated their river homes on March 22, the result of flooding along the Cannonball River. One farmer reported 50 pigs drowned in flood waters. A rancher is unable to feed his cattle, which are stranded on ground surrounded by water and ice. A 500-gallon propane tank was swept away by flood waters, but has since been located and stabilized. The emergency manager has received reports of damaged roads and bridges, as well as flooded basements, including one where the north wall of a basement collapsed after flood waters were pumped out.

In Sioux County, officials closed N.D. Highway 24 on March 25 when the Cannonball River overflowed its banks.

The Adams County Highway Department superintendent reported on March 25 that flooding along the Cannonball River destroyed an 80-foot steel truss bridge, northeast of Hettinger in Adams County. Flood waters forced one end of the bridge off its abutment and knocked bridge beams loose. Traffic has been detoured for four miles around the bridge.

In Mercer County, a Beulah resident reported that 200 gallons of fuel oil spilled and mixed with basement water when his basement was flooded by Knife River waters.

Knife River flooding also flooded basements of 14 rural Dunn County homes, requiring two families to evacuate their homes. Ice chunks floating downstream caused damage to farm buildings. The emergency manager received reports of 80 roadbeds damaged by flood waters.

In southeast North Dakota, spring thaw is beginning to take place as waters from Pheasant Lake in Dickey County flow over the spillway and the Elm River waters backed up over a road. Frozen culverts are forcing runoff to flow over roads.

4. RESOURCES:

LOCAL: No change from the first report.

STATE: No change from the first report.

FEDERAL: No change from the first and second reports.

5. VOLUNTEER ACTIONS: In Grant County, Prairie Learning Center residents helped fill sandbags.

In Pembina County, city of Cavalier volunteers filled nearly 20,000 sandbags during the March 21-23 weekend.

6. MAJOR ACTIONS: State and federal inspectors will conduct Preliminary Damage Assessments (PDA) for Individual Assistance on March 26 and 27 in seven flooded southwest North Dakota counties and two Indian Reservations. Assessment teams are comprised of representatives of county and tribal governments, the N.D. Division of Emergency Management, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the N.D. Department of Human Services and the Small Business Administration. They will conduct on-site assessments in Dunn, Grant, Hettinger, Mercer, Morton, Sioux and Stark Counties and the Three Affiliated Tribes of the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation and Standing Rock Sioux Indian Reservation.

The N.D. National Guard on March 25 monitored the impact of last week's ice dusting efforts along the Sheyenne River near Fort Ransom. On March 26, the National Guard will monitor up to 12 locations along the Sheyenne and Red Rivers.

The National Guard loaned two 400-gallon water trailers to the North Dakota State Youth Correctional Center in Mandan after ice in the Heart River damaged the center's water pipe.

Two National Guard members will continue efforts through March 26 to assist the city of Wahpeton in filling sandbags. They are operating two 2 ½-yard front-end loaders, one auger, and a sandbag attachment.

The Burleigh County emergency manager and public works director participated in a North Dakota Civil Air Patrol surveillance flight on March 25 of the Missouri River.

County highway crews throughout the state continue efforts to clear culverts to facilitate drainage.

Sioux County officials on March 25 alerted a rural Solen family to be prepared to evacuate their home. Cannonball River flood waters were rising close to the home.

In anticipation of record-level flooding in the northeast, the Pembina County emergency management discussed communications response efforts with the Radio Amateur Communications Emergency Services (RACES) coordinator. Sandbagging efforts also continue in Pembina County. City of Cavalier volunteers filled nearly 20,000 sandbags on March 22, using a sandbag machine rented from the city of Grand Forks. The city plans to again rent the machine during the March 28-30 weekend. Volunteers in the city of Natcholls plan to manually fill sandbags on March 26 and March 27. Older school children have volunteered for the project.

Since previous reports, counties issuing emergency declarations include Dickey, Grant, Hettinger, Mercer, Sioux, Stark, Traill and Wells.

7. ASSISTANCE NEEDED: None at this time.
8. OUTSIDE HELP ON SCENE: No change from previous reports.
9. OTHER: National Weather Service reports that North Dakota will experience normal to above normal temperatures statewide. Through Sunday, temperatures will range from the 50s to 60s in the west and from 40s to mid-50s in the east. The chance for showers during this warming trend extends from the evening of March 26 through March 29.

The Weather Service will issue the next "Spring Snowmelt Flood Outlook" on March 28.

The N.D. Division of Emergency Management's Situation Reports for the spring flood, Devils Lake flood and winter storm are posted on the Division's Internet home page. The address is: "<http://www.state.nd.us/dem>".

Raymond J. Staiger, Acting State Director